DEER HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
Deer Herd Unit #24
(Mt. Dutton)
April 2006

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Garfield and Piute counties - Boundary begins at US-89 and SR-62; south on US-89 to SR-12; east on SR-12 to the Widtsoe-Antimony road; north on the Widtsoe-Antimony road to SR-22; north on SR-22 to SR-62; west on SR-62 to US-89.

LAND OWNERSHIP

RANGE AREA AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP

	Year-long range		Summer Range		Winter Range	
Ownership	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%	Area (acres)	%
Forest Service	8374	34%	131391	100%	106357	42%
Bureau of Land Management	1166	5%	0	0%	76366	30%
Utah State Institutional Trust Lands	623	2%	20	1%	35768	14%
Native American Trust Lands	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Private	14450	59%	30	0%	28772	11%
Bankhead Jones	0	0%	0	0%	7225	3%
USFWS Refuge	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
National Parks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Utah State Parks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	0	0%	0	0%	244	0%
TOTAL	24663	100%	131440	100%	254733	100%
	~~0~~		~~131752~~	~~100%~~	~~159508~~	~~100%~~
~~CHANGE (+/-)~~	~~+ 24663~~		~~- 312~~		~~+ 95,225~~	

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, including hunting and viewing. Balance deer herd impacts with human needs, such as private property rights, agricultural crops and local economies. Maintain the population at a level that is within the long term capability of the available habitat to support.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Target Winter Herd Size - Achieve a target population size of 2,700 wintering deer (modeled number).
- Herd Composition - Maintain a region wide three-year average post-season buck to doe ratio ranging from 15 to 20 bucks per 100 does.

	Objective from past plan (2001)	Long-term Objective	2006-2011 Objective	Change
Mt. Dutton	2,700	2,700	2,700	0

POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Monitoring

- Population Size - Herd composition and population size will be monitored through use of post-season and spring classification, hunter check stations, hunter harvest surveys and computer modeling.
- Buck Age Structure - Monitor age class structure of the buck population through the use of checking stations, post-season classification, uniform harvest surveys and field bag checks.
- Harvest - The primary means of monitoring harvest will be through the statewide uniform harvest survey. Achieve the target population size by use of antlerless harvest using a variety of harvest methods and seasons. The winter population should result in an expected annual buck harvest of 250 when normal conditions occur, but recognize that buck harvest will be above or below what is expected due to climatic and productivity variables. Buck harvest strategies will be developed through the RAC and Wildlife Board process to achieve management objectives for buck:doe ratios.

Limiting Factors (May prevent achieving management objectives)

- Crop Depredation - Take all steps necessary to minimize depredation as prescribed by state law and DWR policy.
- Habitat - Pinon/Juniper encroachment on traditional winter rangelands is decreasing diversity and vigor of browse plants. Browse trends averaged slightly down. Four sites had downward trends for browse, 4 others were stable, and 2 sites showed improving trends. Average percent decadence of sagebrush, the key browse species, on the winter range sites more than doubled, increasing from 25% in 1997 to 56.5% in 2003. Young recruitment, on winter range sites, dropped nearly 6 fold from an average of 553 young plants/acre per site to 97 plants/acre. Herbaceous trends were down slightly overall. Six study transects had a downward herbaceous trend, 3 sites were stable, and 1 site, North Pole Canyon, was upward. The upward herbaceous trend on North Pole Canyon was due to an increase in the warm season grass, blue grama. Cover and frequency of crested wheatgrass decreased on three transects, Mud Spring Chaining (24-4), Prospect Seeding (24-4), and Marshall Basin (24-12). Winter ranges on this unit all have very poor forb cover and frequency. Average forb cover on winter ranges was poor at less than _ of 1% estimated at only 0.23% in 1997, declining to 0.08% in 2003. Forb cover and frequency were much higher along the summer and transitional range transects, but drought conditions have caused a decline here as well. Wyoming big sagebrush at Prospect Seeding is in extremely poor condition and it appears that sagebrush will die out there completely in the near

future. A special study transect was established at Sanford to sample an aspen/conifer prescribed burn. It was first read in 1998 prior to the fire of 2002 and the downward soil and herbaceous trends found in 2003 are due to the burn treatment.

- Predation - Refer to DWR predator management policy.

  - A predator management plan is in place for the benefit of mule deer on the summer ranges of this unit..

  - Seek assistance from USDA/Wildlife Services when deer populations are depressed and where there is a reasonable chance of gaining some relief through a predator control effort. Concentrate USDA/Wildlife Services control efforts during and immediately prior to the fawning period.

  - Recommend cougar harvest to benefit deer while maintaining the cougar as a valued resource in its own right.

- Highway Mortality - Highway mortality occurs on U.S. 89 and SR 62, but is not a serious problem on this unit.

- Illegal Harvest - Specific preventive measures will be implemented through Action Plans developed in cooperation with the Law Enforcement Section should illegal kill become an identified and significant source of mortality.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Work with private and federal agencies to maintain and protect critical and existing winter range from future losses. **Winter range restoration efforts must be completed for this deer herd to reach its population objectives. Pinyon and juniper reduction treatments and sagebrush restoration are necessary to stabilize winter range conditions and allow this herd to withstand heavy winters.**

Condition of deer winter range on Unit 24, as indicated by DWR range trend surveys.

Year	Mean DCI score for Unit	Classification	Unit-specific DCI score range: Poor	Unit-specific DCI score range: Fair	Unit-specific DCI score range: Good
1997	48	Fair	20-34	35-52	53-70
2003	37	Poor			

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HABITAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Continue to monitor the permanent range trend studies located throughout the seasonal ranges.

- A downward trend is indicated on the 12 permanent range inventory transects. Implement habitat restoration treatments to reverse the trends on the Mt. Dutton unit.

- Several significant habitat projects have been implemented or completed since 1995. Funds were made available through the Utah DWR Habitat Fund, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, and BLM.

  Completed Projects:
  USFS, rebuilt guzzler - Bear Flat

USFS, new guzzler - Corral Flat
USFS/DWR, Jones Corral prescribed burn and reseed
USFS/DWR, Johnson Bench prescribed burn and reseed
USFS/DWR, Hoodle Creek Water Line
DWR, Black Canyon riparian area
USFS/DWR Seeding after Sanford wildfire of 2002

Partially Completed or Planned Projects:
USFS pinyon juniper thinning Mud Springs and Prospect Creek
BLM, Horse Valley prescribed burn
BLM/SITLA/DWR, Pinyon juniper thinning and removal in the lower winter ranges of Deer Creek, Cow Creek and Cottonwood Creek.

Duration of Plan

This unit management plan was approved by the Wildlife Board on _____ and will be in effect for five years from that date, or until amended.